

THE INFLUENCE OF GENDER AND EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND OF GREEK BANK EMPLOYEES ON THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the present study was to reveal how gender and educational background influences the perceptions of bank employees of organizational culture. The sample of the study consisted of 240 employees from Greek banking institutions, from different occupational positions. 30% of the participants were males and 70% females. The majority of the participants (50%) hold a university degree (N=120) while 20% of them (N=48) had also a postgraduate degree. The assessment of organizational culture was performed with the Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI) developed by Cameron and Quinn (2006). Results indicate that there is a significant difference in the perceptions of the subjects between the two genders ($p < 0.001$), with females preferring the clan organizational culture while males preferred the more competitive market type. In addition, educational background also proved to moderately influence the beliefs of the subjects about organizational culture. Future studies can extend the present work by examining additional parameters that affect employees perceptions of organizational culture.

KEYWORDS: Organizational Culture, Banking Sector, OCAI, Greece

INTRODUCTION

It is widely acknowledged the difficulty in identifying a typology of organizational culture, since it's difficult to 'categorize' shared assumptions and beliefs of individuals. Organizational culture can be described as a group of basic assumptions (Schein 1986), shared values and norms (Deshpande & Webster 1989; Ravasi and Schoultz 2006; Xiaoming & Junchen 2012), that assists its members to cope with problems (Schein 1986), thus providing a smooth running of the company. According to Hofstede (1991), the behavior of an individual in the work place is influenced by three cultures: national, occupational and organizational. National culture involves the values that have been espoused by the family during childhood. Occupational culture, is formed during school and professional life, and includes values and beliefs that are shared with other people. These values are mainly referred to "how things are done" in a specific profession (Deal and Kennedy 1982 in Jones 2008). While national culture is difficult to change during lifetime, occupational and organizational cultures are likely to change.

Deal and Kennedy (1982 in Jones 2008) categorize organizational culture in four types: The Tough-Guy, Macho culture: in this type of culture, is characterized by high stress work and they value greatly their ability to handle high pressure. Taking high risks in order to achieve your personal and company's goals is highly favored. Work Hard/Play Hard culture: this is a culture that is customer oriented. Its characterized by high speed action in order to get quick results. High pressure is mainly derived by the quantity of the work load. Bet-Your-Company culture: this type is characterized by high risk but slow reward. Companies make risky but well planned investments. Process culture: in this culture, the stress is not high, since low risk investments are preferred. The key elements of this culture are precision, detail and technical perfection.

Denison's model of organizational culture, is describing a theory of culture linked to company's performance. First, information is collected from managers about their perceptions on the existent organizational culture. Afterwards, the collected information is processed using a two-dimensional model highlighting the crucial issues of internal versus external focus and flexibility versus stability and their impact on performance and viability. Denison asserts that organizational culture can be described by four cultural traits: adaptability, mission, consistency, and involvement. Each trait each further described by three sub-dimensions: Adaptability: creating change, customer focus, organizational learning. Mission: strategic direction and intent, goals and objectives, vision. Consistency: core values, agreement, coordination and integration. Involvement: empowerment, team orientation, capability development (Denison et al. 2004).

Xenikou and Furnham (1996), recognize four types of organizational culture:

Openness to change/innovation culture: in this type of culture, innovation and change are favored. The main characteristics of the culture are humanistic orientation, affiliation, achievement, self-actualization, task support and task innovation. Task-oriented organizational culture: the main focus on this culture is on the ways the company will be successful, including all the factors that will lead to that direction e.g. quality orientation and attention to detail. Bureaucratic organizational culture: its a conservative type of culture characterized by centralized decision making. Competition/Confrontation organizational culture: the key concept of this type is perfectionism and is characterized by competition and goal orientation.

According to Cameron and Quinn (2006), there are four types of organizational culture: Hierarchical: is a well coordinated culture, where formal rules and policies maintain a smooth running organization. Market: is a competitive culture, where the glue that holds the organization together is winning. Clan: is a "friendly" culture, resembles the extension of family. It is characterized by loyalty to the firm and leaders are thought as mentors. Adhocracy: is a culture based on risk taking and innovation. It is characterized by a dynamic and creative workplace. Based on Cameron and Quinn (2006) typology, Belias and Koustelios (2013) studied the organizational culture of Greek banking institutions. It was found that the dominant organizational culture of the institutions were hierarchical while employees preferred the clan type.

However, literature has pointed the importance of various factors, like gender and educational background, on employees' perceptions of organizational culture. Chen, Fosh and Foster (2008), investigated the relationship between gender and perceptions of organizational culture in three types of Taiwanese banks. They found that individuals' perceptions of organizational culture is influenced by various factors: type of bank, human relations practices, age, educational background and years of service. Furthermore, each bank type had a specific pattern of gender differences that was related to the ownership, history and type of business of that bank type. Dwyer, Richard and Chadwick (2003), studied the influence of gender diversity on firms performance, and the correlation with firm's organizational culture. They demonstrated that gender diversity's impact on firm performance is dependent on the organizational context of the company. If the appropriate culture is present, e.g. adhocracy culture, the benefits from gender diversity will increase.

In general, the gender of employees in a specific institution or organization is considered to be a reason for different perceptions, attitudes, behaviors and strategies. Male employees are expected to be more competitive and prefer hierarchical types of organization (Grant, 1998), while females tend to develop more personal relations and prefer the clan type of organizational culture (Eagly et al., 1992). Additionally, Holt and DeVore (2005) have noted that female employees are more likely to use more effective conflict and problem-solving strategies, like avoidance, compromising or withdrawal, regardless their working environment and organizational culture.

Furthermore, organizational culture perceptions have been correlated with the factor of educational level, indicating that education is very likely to affect employees' priorities, values and practices (Gjurai, 2013). Chen et al. (2008) have supported that the years spent for educational training are likely to affect the years of employment. Therefore, employees who hold a university and/ or a postgraduate degree have less time for adaptation in a certain organization, thus they perceive it to be hierarchical or market-oriented. For this reason, educational level is likely to affect employees' behavior, performance and attitude toward their colleagues and the institution as a whole (Tsui et al., 1992).

In an extension to our previous work, the purpose of the present study was to investigate the effect of two factors, gender and educational background, on employees' perceptions of organizational culture. More particularly, it was hypothesized that the perceptions of female participants about their organization's culture would be different from the ones of male ones. Additionally, it was hypothesized that participants with a university degree (bachelor) would report different perceptions from those without a degree and participants with a postgraduate degree (master) would report different perceptions from those without a master.

METHODS

Participants

The sample of this study comprised employees of a certain bank in Greece. A total of 400 questionnaire sent by e-mail in their accounts at work. After a two months period, a total of 312 questionnaires were returned, giving a response rate of 70 per cent. Of these 240 questionnaires used in the final statistical analysis because the rest were half completed. They were 72 males (30%) and 168 females (70%). The employees ranged in age from 31-60 years ($M= 40.28$, $SD=8.24$). The majority of the participants (50%) hold a university degree ($N=120$) while 20% of them ($N=48$) had also a postgraduate degree. The sample of the study is a group of young and educated people, which means that they have basic knowledge about the concept of this study adding accuracy to the findings (Acar and Acar 2012).

Instruments

In the present study the Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI) survey was used (Cameron and Quinn 2006). The OCAI has been used to identify the organization's current culture. It has also been used to help the members of an organization to identify the culture they would like to be developed in order to match their future demands. It is based on the Competing Values Framework, referring to whether an organization has a predominantly internal or external focus and whether it strives for flexibility and individuality or stability and control (Cameron and Quinn 2006).

The OCAI consists of six questions (Dominant Characteristics, Organizational Leadership, Management of Employees, Organizational Glue, Strategic Emphases, Criteria of Success). Each question has four alternatives (A=Clan, B=Adhocracy, C=Market, D=Hierarchy). Individuals completing the OCAI are asked to divide 100 points among the four alternatives, depending on the extent to which each alternative is similar to the organization being assessed. A higher number of points are to be given to the alternative that is most similar to the organization in question. Results of the OCAI survey are obtained by computing the average of the response scores for each alternative. Once scores are determined for all alternatives in both the Now and Preferred columns, they can be plotted to draw a picture of the organizational culture profile.

In order to be able to use the OCAI survey in the Greek environment permission was obtained and the questionnaire its self was translated in Greek in order to much the meaning of the initial questionnaire. According to Banville et al (2000), when a questionnaire is used in a sample that speak different language, it is important to follow translation and validation procedures in order to be accurate in the specific environment. Vallerand (as mentioned in

Banville et al 2000), has suggested seven steps that are essential in cross cultural studies: a) preparation of preliminary translated versions of the questionnaire, b) evaluation of these versions by experts and preparation of the experimental version, c) pretest of the version, d) evaluation of the content and concurrent validity and g) establishing norms. In the present study, all seven steps were followed in order to apply OCAI instrument for the purposes of the research.

Procedure

The method chosen to assess organizational culture was that of self-completed questionnaires. Researchers informed all subjects that their participation was completely voluntary and the individual responses would be held in confidence. Quantitative data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. Descriptive statistics, reliability analysis and paired t-tests were chosen as the most appropriate method for purposes of this study. The obtained data were tested for reliability with Cronbach's alpha. The Cronbach's alpha indicated that the data were reliable since they scored from 0.76 - 0.95 for the current organizational culture and 0.72-0.85 for the future-preferred organizational culture (Belias and Koustelios 2013).

RESULTS

Using the Independent Samples T-test (Table 1), there was found that there is a significant difference in the perceptions of the subjects between the two genders ($p < 0.001$). Furthermore, there was found that women think that the current order of the four types is D, C, A, B where men thought that the order is C, D, A, B (Figure 1a,b). For the preferred organizational cultures women choose the types with the following order A, D, B and C, where the corresponding order for men is C, B, A, D (Figure 1a,b). Similarly, by using the Independent Samples T-Test, there was found that statistically there is a significant difference in the perceptions of the employees about the current organizational culture between those that they have a Bachelor Degree and those that they don't (Table 2a).

Table 1: The Effect of Participant Gender on the Present and Preferred Organizational Culture

	Gender	Mean	Std. Deviation	p
A Now	Men	24.1667	6.53628	0.000
	Women	17.5000	6.87789	
B Now	Men	23.0556	3.77373	0.000
	Women	15.3571	5.82268	
C Now	Men	28.0556	1.04664	0.000
	Women	21.4286	8.57879	
D Now	Men	24.7222	10.71030	0.000
	Women	45.7143	20.60186	
A Preferred	Men	24.7222	1.04664	0.000
	Women	28.2143	6.29337	
B Preferred	Men	26.3889	5.90748	0.055
	Women	24.8810	4.45489	
C Preferred	Men	30.2778	4.45812	0.000
	Women	20.9524	6.19749	
D Preferred	Men	18.6111	8.51217	0.000
	Women	25.9524	6.27749	

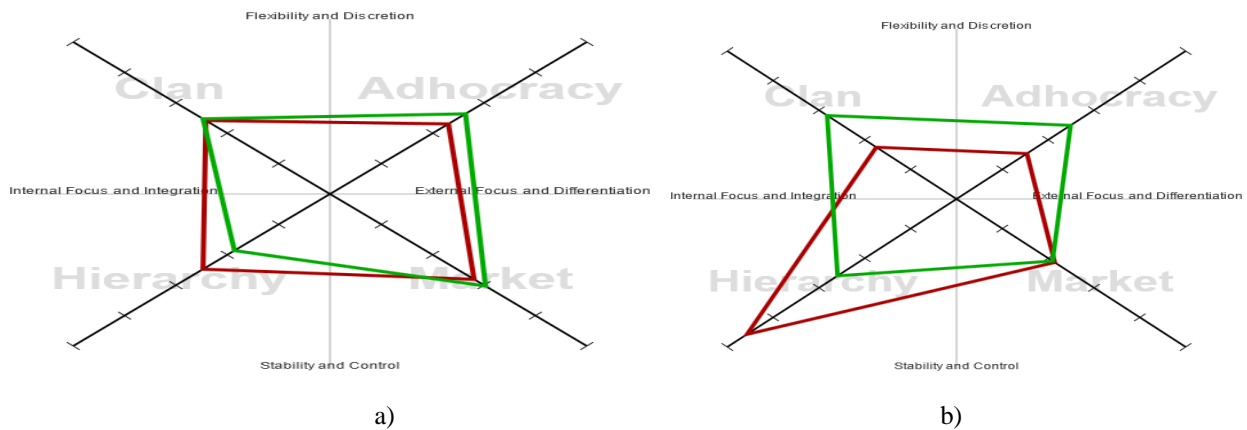


Figure 1: The Organizational Culture Profile of the Bank According to Participant's Gender: a) Men (Now and Preferred) b) Women (Now and Preferred)

Table 2: The Effect of Educational Background on the Present and Preferred Organizational Culture

	Bachelor Degree	Mean	Std.	p
A Now	Yes	19.33	9.72	0.729
	No	19.67	4.02	
B Now	Yes	16.00	7.98	0.000
	No	19.33	3.45	
C Now	Yes	19.17	8.93	0.000
	No	27.67	2.50	
D Now	Yes	45.50	26.29	0.000
	No	33.33	9.23	
A Preferred	Yes	26.83	4.95	0.351
	No	27.50	6.06	
B Preferred	Yes	25.67	6.25	0.300
	No	25.00	3.22	
C Preferred	Yes	22.67	8.36	0.019
	No	24.83	5.51	
D Preferred	Yes	24.83	10.44	0.031
	No	22.67	3.15	

	Master's Degree	Mean	Std.	p
A Now	Yes	17.50	5.60	0.037
	No	20.00	7.69	
B Now	Yes	15.83	7.58	0.056
	No	18.13	5.95	
C Now	Yes	18.33	8.42	0.000
	No	24.69	7.13	
D Now	Yes	48.33	21.90	0.002
	No	37.19	19.67	
A Preferred	Yes	25.42	.42	0.000
	No	27.60	6.10	
B Preferred	Yes	24.17	.84	0.001
	No	25.63	5.51	
C Preferred	Yes	18.33	6.74	0.000
	No	32.08	6.60	
D Preferred	Yes	24.83	7.16	0.000
	No	21.67	6.42	

From the Figure 2 (a,b) it is obvious that the holders of a Bachelor Degree chose with different order both the current and the preferred organizational culture from those who did not have a Bachelor's Degree. Those who have a

Bachelor's Degree sorted the four types of the current organizational cultures in the following order: D, A, C and B, and those who haven't got a Bachelor's Degree they organized the current four types with the order: D, C, A and B. Regarding the preferred types the holders of a Bachelor's Degree sorted the four types as: A, B, D and C, instead the non holders of a Bachelor's Degree they sorted them as A, B, C and D. Using the Independent Samples T-Test again there was found that there is statistically significant difference in the employees' perceptions and preferences between the holders of a Master and the non holders (Table 2b). As someone can see from the Figure 2(c,d), the holders of a Master's Degree chose with different order both the current and the preferred organizational culture from those who did not have a Master's Degree. Moreover, there was found that both those who have a Master and those who don't think that the current order of the four types is D, C, A, B. For the preferred organizational cultures those who have a Master choose the types with the following order D, A, B and C, where the corresponding order for the non holders of a Master's Degree is A, B, C, D.

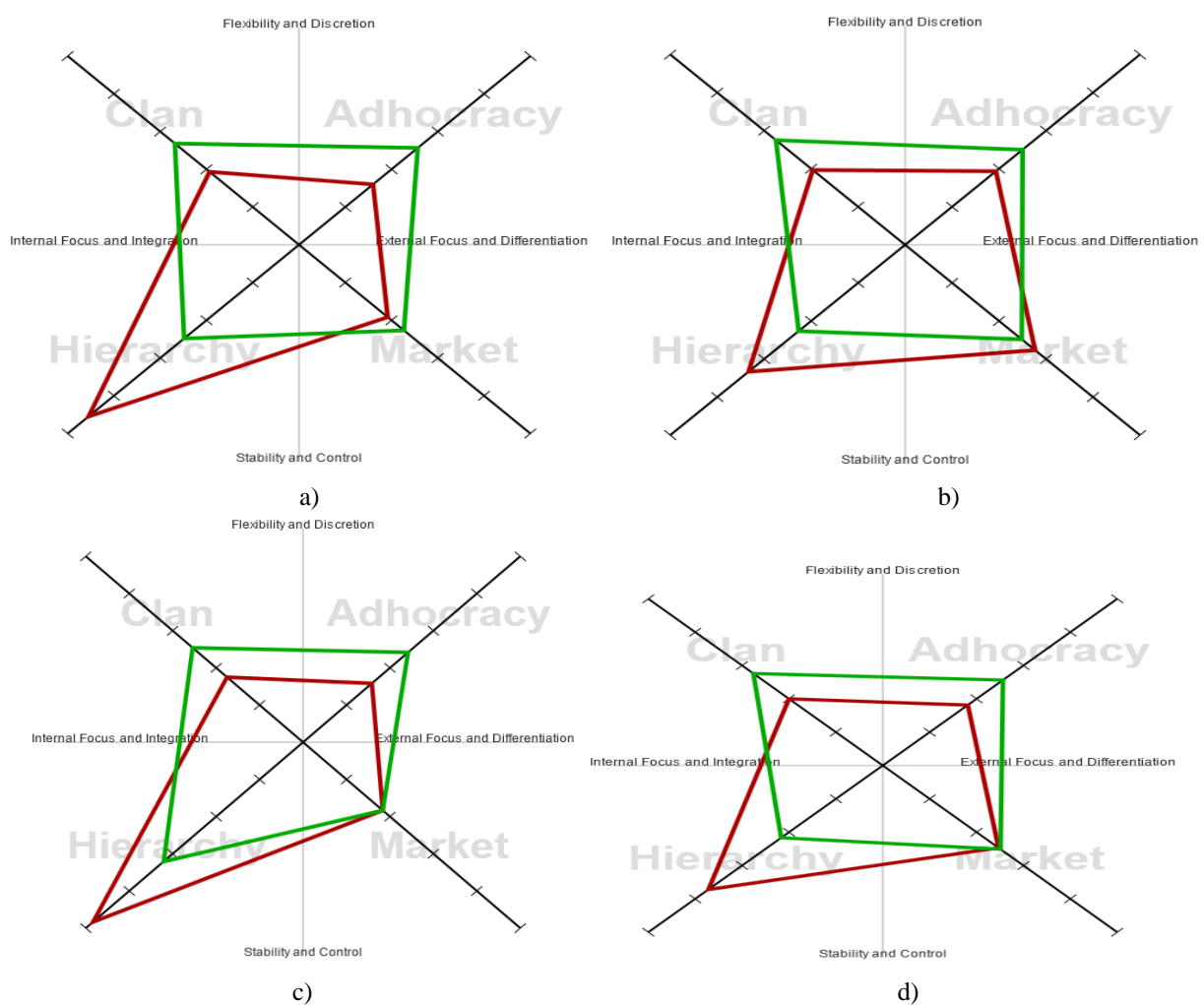


Figure 2: The Effect of Educational Background on the Present and Preferred Organizational Culture
a) Holders of a Bachelors Degree, b) Non Holders of a Bachelor Degree,
c) Holders of a Masters Degree and d) Non Holders of a Master Degree

DISCUSSIONS

The term “culture” in the frame of organizational analysis refers to interaction influences between the organizations and the cultural environment in which they are located. In contemporary societies and business markets, organizations and institutions have become distinctive from the special, unique cultures they have developed. In every occupational context, the culture is created through the actions of its founders, and the organization is gradually formed as

a social group of people. Thus, it could be said that organizational culture is a social construct, as it happens with culture in general (Gjuraj, 2013).

The present study has shown that each employee's perspective of the culture (present and preferred), is formed by various factors such as educational background and gender. Especially gender, proved to influence both the perceived present culture as well the preferred one. In general, women seem to prefer a more friendly-family working environment (clan culture), while men prefer the competitive environment of the market culture. More specifically, women reported that the organization they worked in was a very controlled and structured place, characterized by formal procedures, which were the glue holding the organization together. The organization's leadership was perceived as exemplifying coordination, organizing or smooth-running efficiency. In addition, according to women, the management style in their organization was characterized by security of employment, conformity, predictability and stability in relationships, while efficiency, control and smooth operations were considered to be of great importance. Finally, women reported that success is defined on the basis of efficiency in their organization, where dependable delivery, smooth scheduling and low-cost production are critical.

Regarding the participants' perceptions of the preferred organizational culture, it was found that women preferred an organization with the form of an extended family, where the leadership exemplifies mentoring, facilitating or nurturing. In addition, the preferred management style for women should be characterized by teamwork, consensus and participation, while the organization glue should be loyalty and mutual trust. Furthermore, employees should be committed to the organization and openness and participation should improve human development. Finally, an organization's success should be defined by the development of human resources, teamwork and concern for others.

Men on the other hand gave similar answers for their perceptions of current and preferred organizational culture. In particular, they reported that the organization they worked in was and should be a very results-oriented place, where employees were very competitive and achievement orientated. The leadership was perceived to be exemplifying a non-nonsense, aggressive and results-oriented focus, while the management style was considered to be hard-driving competitive and demanding. The glue that was holding the organization together was and should be the emphasis on achievement and goal accomplishment, while hitting stretch and winning in the marketplace were perceived by men as dominant. Finally, the key of success was considered to be a competitive market leadership.

Thus, it can be said that women reported working in an organization characterized by hierarchy, while they would prefer to work in a more clan institution. On the contrary, men reported that they both worked and would prefer to work in an organization which is characterized by market features and rules. This finding can be explained by the different gender traits of men and women- men are competitive in their working place while women avoid competition and act in a more inclusive and collaborative way (Eagly, Makhijani and Klonsky 1992; Grant 1998). According to Holt and DeVore (2005), men have historically been socialized to hold dominant power positions and communicate in direct and confrontational ways. Women, on the other hand, have been socialized to play a more receptive role, which includes taking care of other people and worrying about their needs. For this reason, they are considered to perceive strong relationships among colleagues as being of great importance, thus they prefer smoothing communication strategies and compromising instead of aggressive and competitive work behavior.

Chen, Fosh and Foster (2008), investigated the relationship between gender and perceptions of organizational culture in various types of Taiwanese banks. They found that individuals' perceptions of organizational culture is influenced by various factors: type of bank, human relations practices, age, educational background and years of service.

However, gender diversity may have a positive effect on firm's performance and the extent of positive affect of gender diversity on firm's performance is influenced by organizational culture. For example, according to Dwyer, Richard and Chadwick (2003), the values of clan organizational culture, is the type of culture that provides a proper environment where the skills and abilities of both men and women can flourish. In addition, Holt and DeVore (2005) provided numerous research data according to which female employees are more likely to use more effective conflict and problem-solving strategies, like avoidance, compromising or withdrawal. In addition, their research revealed that those kind of strategies were used by women both in individualistic and collectivistic cultures.

On the other hand, this gender diversity on perceptions of organizational culture might also be influenced by societal norms. For instance, the perceived role of women in society (family, home work load and responsibilities), may also influence their perceptions about the organizational culture in a firm-e.g. supportive, competitive, or team-working culture (Chen, Fosh and Foster 2008). National culture has a strong influence on people beliefs and is difficult to change during lifetime (Hofstede 1991). Besides national culture, the length of educational training proved to influence the perceived organizational culture. According to Gjuraj (2013), the role of education is generally crucial for the shaping of a specific culture via a system of priorities, values and practices. The present study showed that there is an agreement on the perceived current and favored organizational culture, however there was a statistically important difference on the sorting of the four types of organizational culture. The length of educational training affects the years of employment, meaning less time to conform with the established values of the firm (Chen, Fosh and Foster 2008).

Being more specific, the results of the study showed that the majority of both employees with a Bachelor's degree and of those without one perceived the organization they worked in as hierarchically organized place. However, quite a big number of participants holding a Bachelor's degree reported that they perceived their institution to be a kind of extended family (clan), while many employees without a Bachelor's degree seemed to perceive their institution as market-oriented. Additionally, both participants with and without a Bachelor's degree reported that they would prefer to work in a clan organization.

When it comes to Master's degree holders, both employees with and without a degree seemed to perceive their organization as hierarchical, but Master's degree holders reported that their preferred organizational culture is hierarchical, while non-holders would prefer a clan working environment.

Those findings could be explained by the general attitude, according to which heterogeneous work groups are considered to be less socially integrated and characterized by more conflicts, communication problems and higher turnover rates (Zender & Lawrence, 1989). In addition, employees who differ from their colleagues in several features, like gender, age, race or educational level, tend to feel more uncomfortable in their workplace and less attached to the organization or institution they work in (Tsui et al., 1992).

Finally, an important finding was that the adhocracy organizational type was not selected as a first option by the participants, and the means of the corresponding answers were relatively low. Thus, it could be conducted that adhocracy is neither a current nor a preferred type of organizational culture among Greek bank employees.

CONCLUSIONS

The present study makes a significant contribution to human relation practices by exploring the ways gender and educational background influences perceptions of organizational culture in Greek banking institutions. As it was revealed, there was a significant difference between the organizations' culture and the culture preferred by the female participants, while the difference was smaller when the participants' educational level was taken into account. Such mismatch should be

taken into consideration, as many researches have revealed that it is likely to lead to decrease in job performance (Ojo, 2009), to job dissatisfaction (Lund, 2003) and job burnout (Belias et al., 2013). Additionally, differences between employees' preferred and current organizational culture are likely to affect job commitment and turnover intention (O'Reilly et al., 1991). For those reasons, employees' preferences should be measured, studied and utilized both in the frame of the specific organization they work in and in the frame of branches and national cultures. Assuring employee's well being will improve their performance and productivity and make organizations, institutions and companies more competitive, especially in times of financial crisis.

The results of the present study could be utilized in the development of internal and external marketing strategies of bank institutions in Greece and other countries. In this way, employees could become more close to each other, job committed and efficient, while institutions could become more tight and successful. However, further studies are needed to elucidate other factors that may influence an individual's perceptions of organizational culture, e.g. years of employment, position in the firm. Such studies should take place both in local and in national level, so that the bank field in Greece is improved, becomes more profitable and ensures the prevention of turnover.

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